

**God does no compel us to go against our will;
but he has ways of making us willing to obey**

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God has great mercy on mankind. His kindness is extended because He is not willing that any should perish, but all should receive the gift of eternal life. John 3:16. He loves us and wants heavens best for every last soul on earth, but there will be those who reject Him to the point where He will no longer call or woo them to himself.

Sometimes He deals with a rebellious heart using strong discipline in order to get his child to conform to His plan for the person's life. Look at Hebrews 12:6, Proverbs 3:12, and Revelation 3:19. Every person that God has chosen for a son or daughter unto himself will be disciplined by the Lord and pruned as a fruit bearing tree or vine. This is for our own growth and it is God's way of showing us that He loves us enough not to allow us to go in our own direction which leads to death and eternal separation from God.

In Daniel, chapter 4, King Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation that he wrote and sent throughout his kingdom concerning an event that took place in his life that changed his attitude and understanding of who he was in comparison to the Almighty God of the universe is recorded. He began his writing by addressing all the people, nations, and languages of all who dwelt on the earth. He extended his greeting by asking that peace be multiplied towards them. He shared with them the reason that he was reaching out to them with his personal experience for he thought it was good to show the signs and wonders that the High God had wrought towards him, their king.

Verse 3 reads like this: "How great are his signs! And how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." If you have read the prior chapters you will find that this king was very powerful and that he had been shown by God the kingdoms of the world from God's point of view from the beginning of his power to the end of time through a vision that Daniel, the prophet of God had interpreted for him. Instead of turning to God for guidance, he became so filled with pride that he built a statue of gold and demanded everyone to fall down and worship his image. In his kingdom were three Hebrew children who refused to obey the king and they were thrown into a furnace that had been heated seven times hotter than originally set for because the king was so angry concerning their refusal to worship anything or anyone other than the God of Israel. The king asked them, "Who can deliver you out of my hand?" God delivered them from the furnace and the king declared that God was to be worshipped and respected by all people abiding in his kingdom. However, again his pride got in the way of his good judgment and God sent a vision to him again in chapter 4.

Nebuchadnezzar continued with his story by stating that he was in his house where everything was flourishing around him, in his house and kingdom. He had a dream and it troubled him and frightened him for he believed that it was of a supernatural nature and the vision haunted him. He first called for all the wise men of Babylon to come before him

to interpret the dream. People have a tendency to try all sorts of remedies and worldly counsel when they are troubled and after they have exhausted all other avenues, then they turn to someone with faith for help or they call out to God for guidance. When everything is going good, God is far away from their thoughts or meditations.

All the magicians, astrologers, the Chaldeans and soothsayers listened to the details of his vision, but none could interpret the meaning of the story.

Verse 6 says that at last Daniel came before him having the spirit of the Holy God, and after hearing the dream, was able to tell him the meaning of it.

He had dreamed of a very large tree whose branches reached into the heaven and the sight of it was so magnificent it could be seen to the ends of the earth. All creatures, both man and beast ate of the fruit of the tree for there was enough for all and birds dwelt in its boughs. Suddenly an angelic being came down from heaven and cried these words: "Hew down the tree and cut off the branches; shake the tree and scatter the fruit; send the beasts forth and the birds away from the branches. However leave the stump of the tree roots in the earth and let him be wet with dew of heaven and his portion with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let the heart be changed from a man's into a heart of a beast and let 7 years pass." He went on to say that the angel declared that this decree was given by the holy ones and by the decree of the watchers with the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will and sets up kingdoms over men. He asked Daniel to interpret the dream for the Holy God of heaven would reveal it to him since the wise men were not able to explain the meaning of the vision.

Daniel was much perplexed and troubled for an hour over the meaning of the dream. He warned the king that the dream was not in his favor and he didn't want to speak what had been revealed to him. The king insisted on hearing the meaning of the vision and Daniel told him that the tree represented Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. He had prospered greatly and all the people and creatures in his kingdom were well taken care of under his rule. The angel that appeared and declared that the tree would be cut down and everything be destroyed and scattered except for the roots was God speaking that he was going to disrupt the king's rule by causing him to be driven from his kingdom for 7 years and he would dwell with the beasts of the field and eat grass of the field and he would have a heart of a beast. Dew from heaven would cover him until 7 years had passed and then the king would acknowledge the God of heaven as being supreme and his mind and his kingdom would be restored to him. Thus the king would know that the Almighty God was his provider. He was but a man with all of his possessions of wealth, power and dominion for all these things had been given to him by the God in heaven. In verse 27, Daniel counseled the king to break away from his sins and replace it with righteousness, and turn from his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, that God might have mercy and extend his kingdom power. However the king didn't listen to the counsel and 12 months later he

walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon and spoke these words: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" As soon as the words were out of his mouth, a voice came from heaven and said, "O King Nebuchadnezzar to you it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from you. You will lose your kingdom and be driven out into the fields to eat grass like an oxen, to be wet with dew and you will be there for 7 years until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever he will." That same hour the king was driven out of his kingdom and the prophecy was fulfilled. He lived in the fields, was covered by dew, ate the grass like an ox, his hair was like eagle's feathers and his nails were like bird's claws.

At the end of 7 years he lifted up his eyes to heaven and his understanding returned to him. He blessed the Most High and praised and honored him who lives forever. He declared that God's dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are as nothing and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. None can stay his hand or say unto him, 'What are you doing?'

The kingdom was restored to him, his reasoning was returned to him, in that same hour and for the glory of his kingdom, his honor and brightness returned to him and the subjects, his counselors and lords sought him and he was reestablished in his kingdom and excellent majesty was added to him.

Verse 37 says, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways justice; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase (humble).

God's discipline was effective in the king's life and the change was immediate and continued until the king's death.

When God administers discipline, He doesn't do like a lot of parents do. They warn, they scold, they plead, and threaten, and then they repeat the cycle all over again. The child continues with the unacceptable behavior knowing that nothing is going to happen and the words are not followed with any corrective action so he continues on. When the Lord warns, pleads and woos his child, and he continues to ignore God's voice, that person can expect the corrective measures to be taken just as God has spoken. From Adam and Eve down through the generations, people have been punished for their disobedience to God's laws. Some will face the judgment seat of God on the last day.

In Luke 13:6, there is a parable Jesus spoke concerning a tree that didn't bear fruit in the years that it had been growing. The owner looked on the tree expecting to see fruit and there was none. He told his vinedresser to cut it down because he had come to the tree for three years and yet there was not fruit on the vines. He said "Why waste the space in the ground for a useless tree that doesn't bear fruit?" The vinedresser replied, "Lord, let it

alone this year also, and I shall dig about it and fertilize it; and if it doesn't bear fruit then, I shall cut it down."

God wants his people to be fruitful in him. We are to invest in the kingdom of God that we will have something to present to him on his return. Lazy, unmotivated people will not receive a commendation from the Lord when he returns. I don't want the Lord to have to take corrective measures on me to get my attention. If we judge ourselves we won't be judged. 1 Corinthians 11:31. Many people don't even invest in time searching the Scriptures to find the truth of eternal life. They depend on what a denomination of religion stands for and they blindly accept what they hear from others.

In the story of Jonah, Jonah found out that God's eyes are on us and there is nowhere that we can run and hide from his presence. Jonah intentionally went in a wrong direction from the one God called him. He was told to go to Nineveh and to pronounce judgment on that city. See Jonah 1:1-3. Jonah hoped that he could escape from the Lord. He was so convinced that he had succeeded that he lay down to sleep below the deck until frightened sailors woke him. Jonah realized that his plan had not worked and a life threatening fierce storm was now all around them and the sailors were terrified. That storm got Jonah's attention and he told the men to throw him overboard. The sailors feared the Lord and didn't want to do that, but when the storm continued, they had no choice if they were to save their lives. When the sailors threw Jonah overboard, the sea became calm and the men stood in awe before God and his power. After 3 days and nights in the belly of a huge fish, Jonah finally cried out to the Lord in his great trouble and the Lord answered him. He called to him from the land of the dead and the Lord heard him. Jonah 2:2.

God hears us when we turn to him from our wanderings and if after we have chosen a wrong path, we will confess it we will find forgiveness in him today. 1John 1:9.

Isaiah 30:21 says that you will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left."

King David said that God's word is a lamp unto his feet and a light to his path.

Psalms. 119:105

I pray that all of us will be sensitive to the voice of God and become obedient to the calling that he has called us to that we will finish our work before the Lord returns.

The Apostle Paul had a great testimony as he neared the end of his life. He said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Let us strive to have the same testimony at the end of our life's work on earth.